

# THE CAUSES OF THE ERRORS DONE BY SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS IN USING PERSONAL PRONOUN

Irfan L Dj Toha<sup>1</sup>, Ferry Rita<sup>2</sup>, Abdul Waris<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

Conducting this research aimed at finding out the causes of students' errors in using personal pronoun as subject, object, and possessive pronoun. This research was conducted at MTS Al-Hidayah Besusu. It was descriptive research. The population was the seventh grade students consisting of 51 students. The sample was the all students of the seventh grade students. The instruments that the researcher used were questionnaire, test, and interview. Questionnaire and test were the main focuses of the researcher to state the causes of the students errors, while the interview was used to support the questionnaire and test data only. The result of this research was that the students' errors were caused by *Intralingual Errors*, *Interlingual Errors*, and *Developmental Errors*. In addition, their errors were caused by *Internal Factor* and *External Factors*.

**Keywords:** Errors; Personal Pronoun.

## INTRODUCTION

Making errors is the most natural thing all over the world and it is evidently attached to the human being. The researcher assumes that error refers to word 'wrong' which someone does not realize it. This happens consistently because students do not know the grammar system of the target language. Furthermore, Brown (1980:165) defines:

An error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner [...]. An English learner says: "John **cans** sing", but on the other occasions the learner says "John **can** sing", it is difficult to determine whether 'cans' is a mistake or an error.

Error is classified into three namely Intralingual Errors, Interlingual Errors, and Developmental Errors. Intralingual Errors are caused since the grammar system of the target language is not mastered by students. Moreover Nikeleas (1988:37) states:

This type of errors has nothing to do with learners' native language background but it is caused by problems found within the target language. Errors of this type are

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<sup>1</sup> Email: [irluk\\_88@yahoo.com](mailto:irluk_88@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Email: [Ferryrita@rocketmail.com](mailto:Ferryrita@rocketmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Email: [abdulwaris28@yahoo.com](mailto:abdulwaris28@yahoo.com)

made by the students with varying language background. In this case, the errors made by the students are based on their ability in mastering the structure of the target language structure. Thus, when the students have mastered and understood the structure in the target language well, they will not make the errors.

Interlingual Errors occur because the students' mother tongue interference appears when the students were studying English. Furthermore Nikeleas (1988:37) defines:

This type of errors is caused by interference coming from the students' native language system. In this case from the Indonesian language. Based on the definition above, the researcher concluded, this type of errors caused by the students who are influenced by the Indonesian language or the Indonesian language structures. This type of errors can be corrected by paying attention to the rules of the target language.

Developmental Errors occur for the students overgeneralized one role of English in any situation. In other words, the students were incorrect in generalizing and hypothesizing the English role. Ellis (1997:13) argues that the use of past tense suffix '-ed' for all verbs is an example of simplification and overgeneralization. Moreover Nikeleas (1988:37) proposes:

This type of errors is caused by the process of development in generalization and false hypothesis made by the students. It is indicative of development efforts which will be attempted by active students who like to try out and expand his learning strategies to new situations. For instance, take in remedial classes.

There were two factors influencing the students' errors as well, namely **Internal Factor** and **External Factor**. Dimiyati and Mudjiono (2009) mention that problems in learning can be caused by both internal and external factors. The **Internal Factors** include students' attitude toward learning, motivation, concentration, self confidence, intelligence, and study habit, while The **External Factors** include the teachers' attitudes, teaching and learning facilities, learning environment, and curriculum. In short, internal factors come from the students themselves, while the external ones do from outside of the students. The two factors do influence the students' errors in using personal pronoun.

Personal pronoun is one of nine kinds of pronoun. In English, pronoun is one of the basic parts of speech. It refers to or stands in for a noun. The basic rule of using pronouns effectively is making sure you have identified the noun clearly, called the *antecedent*, that the pronoun is standing in for. There are a lot of rules of using pronoun because there are countless nouns that they can stand for and many ways they can be used in a sentence. To have an excellent start on understanding the rules, we should know the nine categories of pronoun. The nine categories of the pronoun are *personal*, *possessive*, *reflexive*, *intensive*,

*relative, interrogative, demonstrative, indefinite, and reciprocal.* Sulaeman (1999:19) states “Pronouns stand for things but are not the names of things.” In addition, House and Harman (1954:215) state:

Pronoun (from Latin, *pro* meaning for, and *no men* meaning name) is word used instead of a noun or a noun equivalent. The meaning of pronoun is restricted to relation or reference. It many name a person by his relation to the act of speaking. I, you, he, a thing by its relation of nearer or remoteness from the speakers : this, that it may refer to a person or an object as already named : who, which, that it may with adjective significant, suggest quality much, a little enough or number : many, few, all, or order : former, later or distribution : each, either, neither.

The definition above makes us understand what pronouns are. As a pronoun is a word used to replace a noun, it may be used to replace persons, animals, plants, and other things as long as the thing/things are noun. Mc.Crimmon (1967:370) states

Personal pronoun word such as he, we, them, you, etc., belong to class called personal pronoun and are inflected for gender, number, case, and person. The word “pronoun” means “ for a noun, “and pronouns can be substituted for nouns in sentence.”

The personal pronoun might be seen in the table below:

Table 1: Pronoun						
	Personal Pronoun				Possessive Pronoun	
	Singular		Plural			
	Subject	Object	Subject	Object	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> person	I	me	We	us	mine	ours
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	You	you	You	you	yours	yours
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	he/she/it	him/her/it	They	them	his/hers	theirs

The third pronoun case is possessive. Possessive itself can be divided into two, possessive adjective and possessive pronoun. Possessive functions to indicate ownership or relationship. They can be identified as first, second, or third person both in singular and in plural. Possessive pronoun can stand alone, but possessive adjective cannot. Personal Pronoun is used if the thing (noun) has been understood or mentioned before. For instance *That textbook is mine; yours is over there; his is under the table; hers is lying on the bottom stair; this land is ours; theirs is down the road.* Possessive Adjective is used as adjective. It means that it must be followed by noun (noun phrase). For example, *My book, her car, his nice daughter,* and so on. To be clearer, it might be seen in the following table:

**Table 2: Possessive**

Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronoun
<i>my, our</i>	<i>mine, ours</i>
<i>your</i>	<i>yours</i>
<i>his, her, its</i>	<i>his, hers</i>

## METHODOLOGY

This research was a descriptive research conducted to find out causes related to the students' errors in using personal pronoun as subject, object, and possessive pronoun. The population of this research was the seventh grade students of MTS Al-hidayah Besusu. Sudjana (1989:5) states, "Population is a possible totality values as the result of counting of measuring qualitatively of the special characteristics concerning the set of complete and clear objects to be learned." The number of the students may be seen in the following table:

**Table 3: Number of Population**

No	Class	Number of students
1	VII A	27
2	VII B	24
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>51</b>

The researcher took all these students as his sample. Frey et al.(2000:125) defines "A sample is a "subgroup of a population"." It has also been described as a representative "taste" of a group (Berinstein 2003:17). The students were given questionnaire and test to gather data.

Questionnaire, test, and interview were three instruments of the research to obtain his data. To gather data, the first step the researcher did was distributing questionnaire. The researcher used closed questionnaire. Then, the researcher gained data from test. The test was a written test (objective test). The test consisted of 30 items divided into 10 items for personal pronoun as subject, 10 items for personal pronoun as object, and 10 items for the possessive pronoun. The results of the questionnaire and the test were analyzed descriptively and statistically. Surybrata (1997:85) states "Analisis statistik sesuai dengan data kuantitatif atau data yang dikuantifikasikan, yaitu data dalam bentuk bilangan, sedangkan analisis non statistik sesuai data deskriptif." Moreover, the researcher used a formula recommended by Sudijono (1989:79) as stated below:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

Where P = percentage of students' errors

F = frequency of incorrect answers

N = number of students

To classify the percentage of students' errors, the researcher used classification standard adapted from Depdikbud (1993:37) as follows:

- a. 65 % - 100 % is classified as high
- b. 36 % - 64 % is classified as moderate
- c. 0 % - 35 % is classified as low

## RESULTS

In this research, the researcher firstly distributed questionnaire to the students. It was conducted on Monday, September, 9<sup>th</sup> 2013. The data he got descriptively described:

**Table 4:** I have been studying English since I was in Elementary School

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	38	77.55 %
	No	11	22.45 %
Total		49	100 %

For the first statement of questionnaire, "I have been studying English since I was in Elementary School," There were 38 students or 77.55 % stated that they had been studying English since they were in Elementary School. The rest or 11 students did not.

**Table 5:** I love studying English. It makes me fun during studying it

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
2	Yes	34	69.39 %
	No	15	30.61 %
Total		49	100 %

The second statement was to see whether or not the students were encouraged in studying English. In this case, 69.39 % or 34 students love English since it makes them happy, while 15 students or 30 % do not.

**Table 6:** English is not difficult for me to study

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
3	Yes	14	28.57 %
	No	35	71.43 %
Total		49	100 %

The result above was the third statement included in questionnaire. 14 students or 28.57 % stated that English was not difficult for them to study, while those who stated that English seems to be hard for them to study were 35 students or 71.43 %.

**Table 7:** I keep practicing English outside classroom to improve my English

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
4	Yes	18	36.73
	No	31	63.26
Total		49	100 %

For statement above, there were 18 students or 36.73 % students stated that they improved their English by practicing outside classroom, while 31 students or 63.26 % did not.

**Table 8:** I take an English course to improve my English

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
5	Yes	17	34.69 %
	No	32	65.31 %
Total		49	100 %

There were 17 or 34.69 % students only who join an English course, while the rest or 32 students do not.

It is good to take an English course, remembering the total time of English lesson at school is 4 x 40 minutes only a week. It is not sufficient for students having the English lesson at school. Joining an English course is an alternative for students to improve their English more.

**Table 9:** I know what personal pronoun is and understand how to use it with its function appropriately

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
6	Yes	15	30.61 %
	No	34	69.37 %
Total		49	100 %

In the sixth statement, if the students answer YES for this item, they may go ahead responding the next statements, yet if they answer NO, they do not have to go on to the next statements except the last statement. It is because the next three statements were related to the sixth one.

There were 15 students only or 30.61 % who stated that they know what personal pronoun is and what the correct use related to its functions. The 34 students or 69.37 % do not. Then the 34 students did not have to go on to the next statements except the last one.

**Table 10:** *She* and *I* attended the meeting yesterday morning.  
The bold words are object pronoun

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
7	Yes	8	16.33 %
	No	7	14.28 %
The rest		34	69.39 %
Total		49	100 %

This item shows how well the fifteen students understand the personal pronoun. *She and I* are subject pronoun actually, but 8 students stated that it is object pronoun. It might be seen in the table 10. The 8 students stated YES, it means that they agreed with the statement that states that *she and I* are object pronoun. The 7 students disagree with the statement. They, of course, understand that *she and I* are not object pronouns.

**Table 11:** Linda and Vera are watering the plants. They planted *them* yesterday  
*Them* is subject pronoun

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
8	Yes	7	14.28 %
	No	8	16.33 %
The rest		34	69.39 %
Total		49	100 %

This was the eighth statement found in the questionnaire. This was similar to the previous one which was used to see how understand the students to state their answers. There were 7 students or 14.28 % agree with the statements, while those who did not were 8 students or 16.33 %. The students who stated YES were totally wrong for *them* is not subject pronoun, but it is an object pronoun.

**Table 12:** My phone is the same as *hers*. Hers is called possessive pronoun.

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
9	Yes	7	14.28 %
	No	8	16.33 %
The rest		34	69.39 %
Total		49	100 %

In this item, the statement was stated correctly. It was different from two previous ones. The two previous ones were stated incorrectly, but the goal was still the same. It was to see whether the students could state the response correctly or not. There were 7 students who stated correctly, yet 8 students did not.

*Hers* is called possessive pronoun. In English, it is used to avoid doing repetition in sentence. The topic of the sentence above is *My phone and Her phone* (for instance Dila's phone). *Phone* is something talked, so it does not have to be repeated. Possessive pronoun must be used to pronominalize the woman's possession.

**Table 13:** My English teacher has taught & explained us about personal pronoun

Item No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
10	Yes	49	100 %
	No	-	-
Total		49	100 %

The last statement was to make sure whether the students have already studied about it, or in other words, their English teacher has already taught them about personal pronoun. The result, all students stated YES, means that they have already studied about it.

To know the percentage of students' errors in using personal pronoun as subject, object and possessive, the researcher used the formula adapted from Sudijono (1989:79). The result was as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

$$P = \frac{35.07}{49} \times 100$$

$$P = 71.57 \%$$

Having seen the percentage of students errors in using personal pronoun, the researcher took conclusion that the percentage of students' errors was classified as **High**. It is based on classification standard adapted from Depdikbud (1993:37) that 65% - 100% is classified as high.

**Table 15: The Classification Standard of Students' Errors**

No	Scores	Classification
1	65 % - 100 %	High
2	36 % - 64 %	Moderate
3	0 % - 35 %	Low

The students' score in objective test can be seen on the next page:



**Table 14: The Students' Score in Objective Test**

No	Students' Initial Name	Scores			Total Errors	(%)
		Personal pronoun				
		Subject	Object	Poss.Pro		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Muh	4	8	7	19	38.77 %
2	Mut	2	7	6	15	30.61 %
3	Fik S	7	8	4	19	38.77 %
4	Ard	2	8	4	14	28.57 %
5	Wil	1	8	6	15	30.61 %
6	M. Ris	2	9	5	16	32.65 %
7	Wah	5	7	5	17	34.69 %
8	Nad	1	5	6	12	24.49 %
9	Ren G	6	7	7	20	40.82 %
10	Raf	4	7	7	18	36.73 %
11	Afn	3	4	5	12	24.49 %
12	Ars M	4	10	7	21	42.86 %
13	Cit	2	6	6	14	28.57 %
14	Fit	3	6	7	16	32.65 %
15	Har	4	6	8	18	36.73 %
16	Afd	1	9	4	14	28.57 %
17	Arif	5	6	6	17	34.69 %
18	Wul	3	6	7	16	32.65 %
19	Ism W	2	5	7	14	28.57 %
20	Nurf	2	9	7	18	36.73 %
21	Risk	4	7	5	16	32.65 %
22	Wahy	7	6	8	21	42.86 %
23	Nen	3	3	6	12	24.49 %
24	Mut	2	7	5	14	28.57 %
25	Zai	3	7	7	17	34.69 %
26	Syar	0	5	6	11	22.45 %
27	Sri M	5	9	7	21	42.86 %
28	Hus	5	10	7	22	44.90 %
29	Mutm	6	8	5	19	38.77 %
30	Wid	7	8	5	20	40.82 %
31	Leo	4	7	7	18	36.73 %
32	Dir	5	8	5	18	36.73 %
33	Yak	7	6	5	18	36.73 %
34	Sit H	5	7	7	19	38.77 %
35	Sher	4	8	6	18	36.73 %
36	Lub A H	0	3	7	10	20.41 %
37	M. Rif	4	6	7	17	34.69 %
38	Ira	6	6	6	18	36.73 %
39	Maz	5	10	6	21	42.86 %
40	Der G	5	9	6	20	40.82 %
41	And	7	9	6	22	44.90 %
42	Sand G	3	7	4	14	28.57 %
43	Sal A H	2	2	1	5	10.20 %
44	Sit Q	4	7	7	18	36.73 %
45	Waw	7	6	5	18	36.73 %
46	Mar	6	8	8	22	44.90 %
47	Haik	9	7	8	24	48.99 %
48	Ari M	6	9	7	22	44.90 %
49	Wand	6	9	7	22	44.90 %
TOTAL		200	345	297	842	1718.3 %
Average		4.08	7.04	6.06	17.18	35.07 %
						71.57 %

The last, the researcher gathered data from interview. The researcher interviewed the English teacher. The result can be seen below:

RS : How many times do you teach English to the seventh grade students a week?

***T : English is scheduled four hours a week or four times forty minutes for each class.***

RS : How do you teach structure to your students ?

***T : I teach English especially materials that consist of structure, I explain and then give as many examples as possible to make sure my students are getting understand about the material I teach. Then, I evaluate them by giving class and home assignment. I do so in order to make them understand it well.***

RS : How important personal pronoun do you think to teach ?

***T : I think that personal pronoun is too important to teach for it is so close to students' daily conversation. Students often use Indonesian personal pronoun, but they can not apply it in English. I want my students can speak English and try little by little by applying personal pronoun in their daily conversation.***

RS : How do you teach them about it ?

***T : I teach personal pronoun by showing them its positions in sentence, so they can differentiate that personal pronoun may change based on its position in a sentence.***

RS : What kind of personal pronouns have you ever taught ?

***T : Personal pronoun as subject, object, and possessive have been taught. Even, another pronoun ever have been taught like demonstrative.***

RS : In your opinion, do your students use personal pronoun correctly?

***T : So far, my students are getting hard to use personal pronoun both in speaking and writing. They keep using it incorrectly, whereas, I have taught and explained it. They often do some errors in using object and possessive pronoun. I guess is caused by their native language interference.***

RS : What are the common errors your students do in using personal pronoun especially as subject, object and possessive pronoun ?

***T : Well, their errors are on the use of the personal pronoun. Example, pronoun "I", they think that "I" is still "I" if the position is not as subject. In fact it is not. They put subject pronoun as object in sentences. This often occurs.***

RS : Do you have an opinion about the causes of the errors ?

***T : I do not know exactly why the students are not able to use English personal pronoun correctly. But, I have an opinion that they are influenced by their native language (mother tongue). Students' habits in the classroom, like chatting, texting,***

*discussing, without paying attention to my explanation. So, they themselves are getting confused when assignments are given.*

RS : By considering their problems, how do you overcome them ?

*T : To overcome them, I just try to encourage students in learning English. Because, many students are not interested in studying English. Too many reasons why they do not like English. This becomes a big problem for both students and me, for students, they will never able to use English personal pronoun correctly, and for me, I have to look for a better strategy or method for a better teaching.*

RS : What do you want your students do besides studying inside classroom ?

*T : I want my students to study hard or at least they practice English outside classroom. It is better as well for them to take an English course outside for they have one hundred and eighty minutes only for English lesson at school. In English course, they can improve more their English.*

## DISCUSSION

By looking at the data presented above, the researcher concludes that the students were not able to use personal pronoun correctly. It was proved by the result of the students' test. The percentage of the students' errors was higher than **70%**. It is classified as high. The causes of the students' errors are the first, **Intralingual Errors**. This because the students cannot use the English personal pronoun well. In other words, the students do not understand the appropriate position of personal pronoun based on its function in sentence. In addition, the English teacher said that her students could not use personal pronoun correctly. For example, the students used subject **I** in any cases like in object pronoun. If the students master the grammar system of English, they would not do the such errors. The second one is **Interlingual Errors**. The interference of the students' native language grammar system in studying English made the students do errors. In Indonesian, the use of subject **saya** does not change though it functions as object and/or as possessive. Furthermore, there were 26 students who were incorrect in answering the test no 8. They chose C as their answer.

*Vivian Alexandra is my new neighbor. She comes from Jakarta. We call \_\_\_\_ Alexa for short.*  
a. him                      b. her                      c. she                      d. they

The researcher assumes that the students' errors occur since they thought that subject pronoun can be used as object pronoun. The percentage of students' errors was **14.37 %**. The third one is **Developmental Errors**. By considering the **Interlingual Errors**, the

researcher concluded that the students' errors were caused by false hypotheses and generalization of one role English in any case. The students assumed that subject *I* can be used in any cases (object or possessive). This is called overgeneralization. The percentage of *Developmental Errors* was **13.37 %**. Besides the three kinds of the students' errors, they were also influenced by both *Internal Factor* and *External Factor*. The *Internal Factors* were that English is difficult for 35 students of 49. Only did 18 students of 49 take chance to practice English and 15 students were not interested in English lesson. In addition, the English teacher has an opinion that some students liked chatting, discussing, and texting, and also the students keep discussing when the teacher was teaching. They were also holding their mobile phones while texting without paying attention to what the material was being taught. The percentage of internal factor was **75.39 %**. The *External Factors* were the material, and supporting media were limited. It was proved by the indirect observation of the teaching learning process at the school.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on data presented above, the researcher took conclusion that the seventh grade students of MTS Al-Hidayah were not good enough in using personal pronoun as subject, object, and possessive. It made the students keep doing errors in using it. It is caused by some problems. The causes of the students' errors are *Intralingual Errors*, *Interlingual Errors*, and *Developmental Errors*. It is also caused by *Internal Factors* and *External Factors*.

Related to the conclusion of the research stated above, the researcher would like to offer some suggestions which are expected to be useful to help the students to overcome their problems in studying English, and attract their encouragements in teaching learning process. The First, the students should consider the target language grammar system to avoid the errors occur. They should know that each language has different grammar system. The second, the English teacher should find out an appropriate teaching technique to take the students to have a good understanding about the material that is taught especially in teaching personal pronoun, should give as many assignment either class or home assignment as possible to see how they do errors. By using the way, the teacher can correct the students' errors based on the errors they do, should take the students to the grammar system of the target language (English) and should have the students to keep in their mind that each language has grammatically different system from the others. The teacher also should find out attracting media to encourage the students in studying English, should have

the students to speak English either inside and outside the class, and should apply speaking English during the English lesson, so the students keep practicing their English in. As the result, the students never bring their native language system into English's and avoid doing errors.

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